

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12

DPW-01 OMB-01 GAC-01 IO-12 RSR-01 SR-02 ORM-03 /100 W

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R 260315 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9178

USDEL FRANCE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 4946

E. O. 11652/ GDS

TAGS: PINT PINS MILI VS

SUBJECT: MR 1 CEASEFIRE AND POLITICAL OVERVIEW FOR MAR. 20-24,1973

FOL TEL SENT ACTION IMMEDIATE SAIGON FROM DANANG DTD MAR 25

1973 RPTD TO YOU FOR YOUR INFO

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L DANANG 275

BEGIN SUMMARY: MILITARY ACTIVITY BY BOTH SIDES THROUGHOUT THE REGION WAS AT A FAIRLY LOW LEVEL DURING THE FIVE- DAY REPORTING PERIOD. NVA UNITS CONTINUED TO PRESS THEIR PROBES INTO THE ARVN 1 ST DIV AO WEST OF HUE, SEEKING TO IMPROVE POSITIONS FOR FUTURE OFFENSIVE ACTION. COMMUNIST MILITARY BUILDUP IN THE WESTERN AREAS OF THE REGION CONTINUES AT A BRISK PACE. THE PROMISE OF PRODUCTIVE ICCS ACTIVITY IN C- F REGION I NOTED LAST WEEK FALTERED BADLY DURING THE PERIOD. IN C- F REGION 2 VIRTUAL INACTIVITY WAS BROKEN ONLY BY SOE ADMINISTRATIVE IMPROVEMENTS AND BY PREPARATION TO OBSERVE PRISONER RELEASES IN DUC PHO AND QUANG TIN. END SUMMARY.

1. THIS OVERVIEW COVERS THE PERIOD MARCH 20-24, 1973, FIVE DAYS AS OPPOSED TO SEVEN FOR PREVIOUS OVERVIEWS.

2. MILITARY SITUATION: THERE WERE NO SIGNIFICANT NEW
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TRENDS NOTED IN MR I ' S MILITARY SITUATION OVER THE PAST FIVE DAYS. FIGHTING IN THE MARINE AND AIRBORNE AOS, WHICH

HAS BEEN DECLINING SINCE THE BEGINNING OF CEASEFIRE, FELL TO A NEW LOW AS ONLY A HANDFUL OF GROUND CONTACTS TOOK PLACE. THERE WERE ISOLATED, LIGHT MORTAR ATTACKS BY THE COMMUNISTS AND NO ARTILLERY FIRE OF CONSEQUENCE. THE NVA MAINTAINS A FOOTHOLD ON THE SOUTH BANK OF THE THACH HAN RIVER SOUTH-WEST OF QUANG TRI CITY, AND IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE GVN'S DECISION NOT TO PRESS ATTACKS AGAINST THIS POSITION MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE COMMUNISTS' RELATIVE QUIESCENCE. BOTH SIDES ON THE NORTHERN FRONT APPARENTLY FEEL THEY CAN GAIN LITTLE BY FURTHER MAJOR MILITARY PROBES AT THE MOMENT. FOR ITS PART THE NVA MAY HAVE CONCLUDED THAT PRESENT FIELD POSITIONS REPRESENT A SATISFACTORY LINE OF DEPARTURE FOR ANY FUTURE MILITARY INCURSIONS SOUTHWARD. RVNAF INTELLIGENCE CONTINUES TO PROVIDE DETAILS OF COMMUNIST MILITARY BUILDUP IN WESTERN QUANG TRI AND THUA THIEN, WITH AMPLE AND REPEATED SIGHTINGS OF ROAD- BUILDING, TRUCK MOVEMENT, AAA EMPLACEMENT, AND ARMOR. A SECOND SET OF SAM MISSILES WAS SIGHTED ON MARCH 21 TO THE EAST OF KHE SANH AND LENT CREDENCE TO THE BELIEF THAT MULTIPLE MISSILE SITES ARE BEING SURVEYED, IF NOT PERMANENTLY OCCUPIED, FOR FUTURE USE. THE KHE SANH AIRFIELD NOW APPEARS TO HAVE 3,100 FEET OF USABLE RUNWAY.

3. THE COMMUNISTS CONTINUE TO APPLY STEADY PRESSURE AGAINST ALL THREE REGIMENTS OF THE ARVN 1 ST DIVISION TO THE WEST AND SOUTHWEST OF HUE. IT IS IN THIS AREA THAT THE ENEMY EVIDENTLY FEELS HIS POSITIONS REQUIRE ADJUSTMENT EASTWARD IN ORDER TO PROVIDE A FAVORABLE JUMPING- OFF STANCE FOR FUTURE MILITARY OPERATIONS OR TO HARASS HUE BY ARTILLERY. THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE JOCKEYING IN THE BASTOGNE, KIM QUY AND VEGHEL AREAS SOUTHWEST OF HUE. MOST OF THE GVN ARTILLERY FIRES FOR THE FIVE- DAY PERIOD TOOK PLACE WITHIN THE 1 ST DIV AO AND WERE CATEGORIZED AS " SUPPORTING FIRES."

4. TO THE SOUTH OF HAI VAN PASS THERE WAS A CONTINUATION OF THE PATTERNS OF PREVIOUS WEEKS. THE GVN IS MOPPING UP RESIDUAL VC LOCAL FORCES IN SEVERAL DISTRICTS OF QUANG NAM; THE COMMUNISTS CONTINUE TO RESIST TENACIOUSLY. SPARING BETWEEN THE ARVN 2 ND AND NVA 711 TH DIV IN QUE
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SON VALLEY ALSO CONTINUES. IN QUANG TIN AND QUANG NGAI WE CAN POINT TO NO SIGNIFICANT DEPARTURES FROM THE RECENT TREND OF ACTIVITY. GVN TERRITORIAL FORCES CONTINUE TO PRESS AS FAR INTO CONTESTED TERRITORY (WESTERN SON TINH AND BINH SON, AND INTO THE BATANGAN PENNINSULA) AS THEY CAN AND ARE MEETING SPORADIC RESISTANCE, MAINLY FROM LOCAL VC RATHER THAN NVA FORCES. THERE HAS BEEN NO LACK OF SMALL, SHARP, SCATTERED ENGAGEMENTS BUT IN TERMS OF OVER- ALL MILITARY ACTIVITY IN QUANG TIN AND QUANG NGAI THERE

HAS BEEN NOTHING APPROACHING THE LEVEL OF HOSTILITY WHICH DEVELOPED DURING THE SA HUYNH CAMPAIGN EARLY IN CEASEFIRE. RVNAF INTELLIGENCE SOURCES ARE RECEIVING FURTHER INDICATIONS OF COMMUNIST INTENTION TO REINITIATE THE DRIVE TO CAPTURE SA HUYNH BUT IT APPEARS UNLIKELY THAT THE NVA 2 ND DIV RETAINS ADEQUATE PUNCH TO MOUNT A MAJOR EFFORT THERE AT THIS TIME. COMMUNIST ROAD- BUILDING ACTIVITY CONTINUES APACE IN THE HILLS.

5. ICCS ACTIVITIES: LAST WEEK'S PROMISING INITIATIVES BY THE REGION I ICCS HAVE FALTERED BADLY. THE FOUR DELEGATIONS HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO AGREE ON WHAT OCCURRED MARCH 4 AT VINH HOA PHUONG, AND THE INVESTIGATION OF THE CUA VIET BATTLE HAS BEEN BLOCKED BY THE PRG/ DRV. SINCE THE PRG HAD REQUESTED ONE INVESTIGATION AND THE RVN THE OTHER, BOTH INVESTIGATIONS WERE SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN LINKED AND CONDUCTED IN TANDEM IN ORDER TO ELICIT COOPERATION FROM BOTH SIDES. THE FAILURE TO INVESTIGATE BOTH INCIDENTS COULD HAVE WORSE CONSEQUENCES THAN INVESTIGATING NEITHER. AS THE SITUATION STANDS NOW, THE RVN FEELS IT WAS TRICKED INTO AN INVESTIGATION OF THE PRG ALLEGATION AND THEN CHEATED OUT OF A HEARING ON ITS OWN COMPLAINT.

6. IN REGION II THE MAJOR ACTIVITY HAS BEEN IN PREPARATION FOR OBSERVING PRISONER RELEASES IN QUANG TIN AND QUANG NGAI PROVINCES, SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 25. THE DELAYED MOVE OF THE CHU LAI TEAMS MAY TAKE PLACE DURING THE COMING WEEK SINCE THE LAST ROADBLOCKS- MESS FACILITIES AND FURNISHINGS- HAVE BEEN OVERCOME.

7. POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC: THE REPORTING PERIOD HAS BEEN QUIET ON THE POLITICAL SCENE. THE VNQDD- THONG NHAT MEETING
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IN TAM KY HAS YET TO PRODUCE DISCERNABLE REACTIONS IN THE REGION. EVEN THE MARKED INCREASE IN RICE PRICES REPORTED LAST WEEK HAS CAUSED ONLY GRUMBLES SO FAR. THE HARDEST HIT WILL BE THOSE NON- GOVERNMENT WORKERS ON A MORE- OR LESS FIXED INCOME, SUCH AS THE DOCK WORKERS, CYCLO DRIVERS, AND DAY LABORERS. THE MILITARY AND GOVERNMENT WORKERS BUY THEIR RICE UNDER A GENEROUS SUBSIDY ARRANGEMENT; THE ENORMOUS REFUGEE POPULATION RECEIVES RICE FREE AS A PART OF ITS SUBSISTANCE ALLOWANCE

(AND REFUGEE FAMILIES WILL PROFIT FROM THE PRICE INCREASE BY SELLING OFF THEIR SURPLUS RICE AT THE INFLATED PRICE); AND THOSE IN FOOD RELATED BUSINESSES WILL, OF COURSE, PASS THE INCREASE ON TO THE CONSUMER.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 07 MAY 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 MAR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SAIGON04946
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730348/abqcehaa.tel
Line Count: 165
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 DEC 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05-Dec-2001 by martinml>; APPROVED <28-Dec-2001 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> jms 971224
Subject: MR 1 CEASEFIRE AND POLITICAL OVERVIEW FOR MAR. 20-24,1973
TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT
To: STATE
FRANCE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005